

1. The first of the three is the "General
Principle" which is the foundation of the
entire system. It is the principle of the
"Three Principles" which are the basis of the
entire system.

1119. Coleman
Smith, 1885.

PRIZE
ESSAY AND POEM
OF THE
LITERARY INSTITUTE,
VICTORIA, V. I.,

**On the Beauties of the Scenery
as Surveyed from Beacon Hill.**

VICTORIA, V. I.

J. E. McMillan, Printer, Morning News Office.

1868.

PRIZE ESSAY.

The influence of scenery on the mind is acknowledged by all. Not only are those of cultivated intellect affected by it, but even the ignorant and depraved feel unconsciously its power. The external world is indeed a reflex of the moral world, and has been termed "the visible living garment of God." There are phases in nature which correspond to every emotion that agitates the breast, from the first tender blossoming of hope, to the last scowling blackness of despair. Thus Wordsworth, the great poet of nature, says :

"How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less,
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted :—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the Creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish."

The love of Nature is one of the most refining and elevating emotions of which man is capable, and has been a redeeming point in the characters of many. It is a strong characteristic of Byron and Rousseau, and, like charity, covers a multitude of other faults. Without running into Pantheism—the worshipping of Nature as God—it is not only a natural but an exalting exercise of mind, to worship God in nature. And although some have been led to regard researches into the constitution of the universe as a substitute for all religion, yet a deep love of the beautiful, as expressed in the works of creation, will, in a well regulated mind, ever lead "from Nature up to Nature's God."

It is the office of the Beautiful, in art as well as nature, to purify and refine, to wean man from sordid influences; and he who has the misfortune to be wanting in an appreciation of it, is dead to a thousand sources of interest and loveliness which everywhere present themselves. We live in an atmosphere of grandeur and beauty; earth, air, water and sky are redolent of it, and offer a never failing source of enjoyment to him who sympathises with nature. The presence of the beautiful in our homes, gives a grace to daily life, and sheds a lustre on the humblest objects. Without some attention to it home ceases to be attractive—neatness, order, fitness, all are elements of the beautiful. This fair world, these flowers with their rainbow hues, these forms of beauty and grace, tell us in unmistakable language that their Creator had something more in their design than a merely utilitarian purpose, and proclaim that they were made to adorn the earth, minister to man's delight, and satisfy his cravings for the grand and beautiful.

Whilst ordinary scenery, the woodland and the dale, the gentle slope and the winding river, convey soothing and agreeable images, it is reserved for mountain scenery to touch those deeper chords, and awaken those grander sensations, which it is one of the highest privileges of our nature to feel. The many allusions to mountains in Scripture, show the powerful influence they exercised on the old Hebrew writers. Thus we find in the Psalms: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help;" "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains;" and again, "The mountains shall bring peace unto the people, and the little hills, righteousness." The influence and attributes of mountain scenery have been analysed with wonderful subtlety and expressed with great elegance of diction, by John Ruskin, one of the most accomplished critics of this or of any age.

The love of mountain scenery is a striking manifestation of the spirit of the age in modern times. In the classical era, and in the middle ages, mountains were looked on as objects of terror, places only fit to be "inhabited by the beasts." Even so late as the times of Addison and Gray, these poets could find no better epithets to apply to them than "horrid," "rugged," etc.; but when the "ideas of the middle ages decayed, and classical traditions lost their power," as well as improved means of travel had made mountains more accessible, it was suddenly discovered that nature possessed transcendent charms, and first Rousseau, and then Goethe and Wordsworth paved the way for its interpretation, and in the exposition of its beauties, shewed the close analogy that exists between the material and the moral world. †

These considerations suggest themselves on surveying the view from Beacon Hill, in which mountains form the most prominent and attractive feature. The panorama commanded from this site, is probably not excelled at any other city in the world, and may be said to be an epitome of the Universe. It embraces hill and dale, the rugged cliff and the gentle slope, the woodland and the forest, the smiling city and the mighty ocean—on the one hand civilization, on the other barbarism, and the howling wilderness. Above all, it displays those towering masses, ever marked features of the earth, but pre-eminently conspicuous on this coast. These have their culminating point in Mt. Baker, one of the great peaks of the Pacific. Looking at this mountain, which stands up as a lonely sentinel of the silent land, with its hoary head far above the adjacent ridges, and its breast covered with the soft and shining snow, we are all the more interested remembering that from that summit, now smooth and

† "Love of the Alps," Cornhill Magazine, July, 1867.

peaceful, have belched forth volcanic flames and burning stones, and that beneath that breast of unsullied white lie the scoriæ and lava thrown out from the earth by forces that may shake a continent. This fact has caused it to occupy the attention of those who have considered the causes of the shocks of earthquake which from time to time agitate the coast.

Following a park-like glade on the outskirts of the city, the visitor from Victoria enters a broad, open space about a mile and a half in circumference, dotted with clumps of dwarf oak and fern, and bordered with stately pines mingled with oaks. It is open on one side to the sea, with its sheltered bays and nooks, where grassy slopes kiss the water's edge, and where the tender green of the copses, filled with the alder, willow and cotton-wood, forms a pleasing contrast to the dark foliage of the pines. Ascending the rising knoll, we stand upon Beacon Hill, and find ourselves at once in the centre of a charmed circle, as if some Prospero had waved his magic wand and evoked a scene of enchantment. Beneath our feet is the greensward strewn with flowers of every hue; immediately around, is a magnificent combination of the park and the forest; whilst beyond, is the old and hoary sea rolling against the base of yonder snow-capped mountains that encircle the horizon.

On a fine day, looking towards the north, Victoria is seen from this spot to great advantage. The upper portion of the city being on an elevated plateau, reveals its white walls and houses sparkling in the sun, and glimpses of its churches and public buildings are seen at intervals through the dark masses of foliage. The cathedral, standing by itself, is prominent in the view of the city, and in the distance rises Cedar Hill, whose jagged outline is dotted with firs. The summit of Beacon Hill appears to have been formerly used as an Indian burial ground, and bears some resemblance to an Anglo-Saxon tumulus, or barrow. We may suppose that here there were formerly dis-

played flags, painted images of wood, and the picturesque accompaniments still to be seen in other portions of the island. Imagination cannot help picturing the solemn spectacle that must have taken place at the burial of the chiefs who were here laid, amid the sad chanting of the waves and the wailing of the winds, in a temple not made with hands, its walls the everlasting mountains, its roof the blue dome of heaven, whilst the moaning sea has repeated their dirge throughout the rolling centuries.

In the spring season of the year the flowers cover the ground. The slopes round Beacon Hill are one blaze of yellow and gold, "you can scarce see the grass for flowers." The variety and beauty of the *flora* of this island have been often described. Every fortnight brings a succession. There are the crocus, the lily, the yellow pansy, the purple violet, the blue lupin, the tiger lily, the campanula and larkspur, the columbine pendent like a fuchsia, the wild currant with its crimson flowers, and chief among others a kind of hyacinth, named the "camass" by the Indians, who often go forth in droves to dig out its roots. There are also the sweet briar and the wild rose, the perfume of which, wafted on the cool sea breeze and mingled with the odorous scent of the pines, converts the wilderness into a garden. In the cultivated lands the most gorgeous combinations and vivid contrasts present themselves, the lupin being seen in vast sheets of bluish purple, together with the crimson red of the wild sorrel and the bright yellow of the buttercup.

Looking towards the west, the scenery, although of a more sombre character, is not unmixed with pleasing elements, particularly when seen at sunset. There are the Goldstream mountains clothed with pines from base to summit, their graceful and undulating outline extends towards the promontory of Sooke, opposite Race Rocks, and contrasts well with the stern and rugged peaks of

the Olympian range in Washington Territory beyond. A feature of interest to the stranger, is the entrance to Victoria harbor, and a little beyond it that of Esquimalt. It was in this neighborhood, on the spot now known as Macaulay's plains, that on May-day, 1792, Captain George Vancouver touched these shores. His description as follows, may be read with interest: "On landing on the westward of the supposed island, and ascending its eminence which was nearly a perpendicular cliff, our attention was immediately called to a landscape, almost as enchantingly beautiful as the most elegantly finished pleasure grounds in Europe. The summit of this island presented a nearly horizontal surface, interspersed with some inequalities of ground, which produced a beautiful variety on an extensive lawn covered with luxuriant grass, and diversified with an abundance of flowers. To the northwestward was a coppice of pine trees and shrubs of various sorts, that seemed as if it had been planted for the sole purpose of protecting from the N. W. winds this delightful meadow, over which were promiscuously scattered a few clumps of trees, that would have puzzled the most ingenious designer of pleasure grounds to have arranged more agreeably. Whilst we stopped to contemplate these several beauties of nature in a prospect no less pleasing than unexpected, we gathered some gooseberries and roses in a state of considerable forwardness." †

A striking object in this wild scene is the Race Rocks lighthouse, that "friendly beacon" to the storm-tossed mariner, and sign to the weary emigrant of near approach to his promised land. Nor must we omit to mention that extraordinary and beautiful spectacle the Mirage which is often to be seen here in the summer time, in bright calm weather.

On looking toward the south, the view presents

† Vancouver's Voyage of Discovery, vol. 1, ch. 4, bk. 3.

the Olympian range, a grand chain of snow-capped mountains, from 8000 to 9000 feet high. They generally appear like a vast wall rising sheer from the water's edge, but in certain states of the atmosphere they are more clearly defined, and are then found to consist of several distinct ranges. The grandest effects are seen in stormy weather when the mists and vapours wreath and wind about, disclosing peak after peak, range beyond range—an endless, ever-shifting panorama. About the centre of the chain is a large gap opening up into the valley of the Elkwha, to which may be applied that beautiful phrase in the language of old, "The Gates of the Hills." At the upper extremity of the valley is Mount Olympus, the loftiest mountain in the range, conspicuous in the warmest summer by its snow covered peaks. Toward the eastern termination of these mountains, in the dip formed by the two last may be seen the summit of Mt. Rainier supposed to be the loftiest on this coast. It takes its name from Rear Admiral Rainier, a friend of Vancouver, and is distant 150 miles. In contrast with these eternal snows, as yet unsullied by the foot of man, are the blue waters which separate us from the American shore, bearing on their bosom yonder stately ship freighted for a distant port, and yonder small canoe creeping along the shore, which, with its squalid occupants, harmonizes well with the desolate grandeur of the scenery. We behold man, who has bent the powers of nature to his easy motion, side by side with the savage, who, in his rude craft, still struggles against them. This contrast is rendered all the more striking by the appearance of the mail steamer, which links this green isle of the sea to the big world beyond and brings to its exiled denizens tidings of those that are far away.

The most imposing portion of the panorama is toward the East, where, across the Gulf of Georgia, the great snow-covered peaks of the Cascade

range rear their jagged crests on the far horizon. Some of them are quite isolated and when viewed in the clear and crisp atmosphere, appear to rise out of the sea, "mountains that like giants stand to sentinel enchanted land"; their reflections mirrored in the still and glassy waters, and prolonged from time to time by gentle undulations producing a magical effect. Here may also be seen the entrance to Puget Sound, a magnificent sheet of water, along whose shores grow the spars which have found such favor with the navies of the world. In all probability the terminus of the Railway that crosses the Northern portion of the American continent, will be on some point on these shores, so that the fleets "of Ormus or of Ind" will in future track its surface.

But the culminating point of the view is unquestionably Mt. Baker, whose great peak, clad in pure white, rises in solitary majesty to a height estimated at between 12,000 and 13,000 feet. It is remarkable for its beauty of outline, and bears a considerable resemblance in this respect to the Jungfrau, the Queen of the Bernese range of the Alps. It was observed by the third lieutenant of Vancouver, and received his name. However deserved the compliment, one cannot but wish he had possessed a name more euphonious. For, to those ignorant of its origin, it is apt to suggest a very common process of domestic life, in connection with one of nature's grandest objects. The great height of this mountain is rendered the more apparent from the circumstance of there being no other peaks in the immediate neighbourhood to dwarf it, and also from the comparatively low height of the hills intervening between the spectator and its base. A group of pines in the foreground with their dark foliage also enhances the brilliant effect of the snow. Looking at this mountain, which stands up as a lonely sentinel of the silent land, with its hoary

head far above the adjacent ridges, and its breast covered with the soft and shining snow, we are all the more interested remembering that from that summit, now smooth and peaceful, have, within the memory of man, belched forth volcanic flames and burning stones, and that beneath that breast of virgin white repose the forces that may shake a continent. This fact has caused it to occupy the attention of those who have considered the causes of the shocks of earthquake which from time to time agitate the coast. To the left of Mt. Baker are some distant peaks; these are the Fort Hope mountains, on Fraser river, in British Columbia. Coming nearer, in the middle distance a feature of historical interest presents itself. For there lies the upper portion of the famous island of San Juan, the circumstances connected with the occupation of which by joint British and American Garrisons are too well known to need recapitulation. Nearer still is the residence of the Governor, a castellated structure imposingly situated on a ridge of rocks, with villas, gardens, and homesteads scattered around. All these give that human element to the landscape without which wild and uncultivated nature soon ceases to be attractive, and to leave those agreeable impressions which form so great a charm in the scenery of more civilized countries.

No one can survey these magnificent peaks, arrayed in virgin white, that have stood from all time with their foundations deeply laid in the earth, emblems of stability and power, without some emotion of awe and wonder, and without being for a while spell bound and exalted. "As the spirit of the lowlands is repose, so that of the hills is action"; and these sharp peaks lifting their crests to heaven seem to cry out as it were, and realize to us the convulsive throes that brought them forth with anguish into the world, an everlasting monument of the Creator's power. In their presence,—in the presence as it

were of the Eternal, how insignificant becomes man with his hopes, his fears!—the creature of a day, a flower blooming in the morning faded at eve.

At all times is this scenery grand and beautiful, whether seen in the early morning when the rising sun tinges Mt. Baker with a tender rose color, at noon, when the snow fields gleam like polished silver, or at eventide, when Mt. Baker glows like fire, and the western mountains are bathed in purple, while the glassy waters reflect tints of green and gold changing into rose and lilac till the sun sinks behind the hills, and leaves the snowy peaks faintly defined on the sky, blanched and ghastly—all color—all life fled. After the torpor and gloom of the winter, nothing can be more inspiring than a walk to Beacon Hill. Freed from the din of the city, its gnawing cares, its feverish excitement, we breathe a while the purer atmosphere and revel in the sense of space. Reposing upon the green-sward, we yield ourselves up to the contemplation of the scene. Its grandeur and beauty sink into the heart,—the clear sky, the balmy air, the plash of the waves, the warble of birds, the voices of happy childhood, give a tone to the jaded nerves,—all sterner passions yield to quieter emotions of tranquillity, of tenderness and peace. Lulled into a reverie the present fades away, Fancy weaves her spell and takes possession—she sees a smiling land, a great city crowded with stately edifices, its broad streets resounding with “the hum, the shock of men,” its wharves crowded with merchandize, its garners filled with the wealth of the Indies, its ports sheltering the flags of all nations, its ships covering every sea—she sees a cathedral with tapering spire and fretted pinnacle of enduring stone, rivalling England’s proudest structures, while mansion after mansion, homestead after homestead greets the eye—she sees through the length and breadth of the land

those barren rocks yielding up their ore, the solitary places resounding with the stroke of the anvil and the forge, the desert blossoming as the rose,—Victoria no longer wan and drooping, no longer dejected and cast down upon the earth, but risen like a Phoenix from its ashes, exulting in the fulness of strength, and pressing on in her mission, her brow radiant with hope, and her future bright with promise—she sees this the youngest born of the colonies taking her place as the brightest pearl in England's diadem—the Paradise of the Pacific—the Queen of the West.

And Reason, Faith whisper, "Arise! no longer give way to vain regrets, be up and doing; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for the night cometh wherein no man can work."—That as the chill and gloom of winter pass away, and with returning spring nature bursts into life, so should we wake up to a new life, to a second spring.—That as yonder Mirage fades away, and objects are revealed in their true proportions, we should no longer be the sport of visionary projects, and buoyed up by cruel hopes, but pursue realities instead of phantoms. That as yonder Beacon shines on the darkest night to guide the storm-tossed mariner to a haven of refuge, so amidst the clouds of adversity the unerring light of Truth should point out the path we ought to tread, and shed a lustre on our way :—that our aims should be lofty as those mountains, our resolves steadfast as those hills, our desires pure as those snows, so that our daily life may be encompassed with wisdom and beauty, harmony and peace, and that amid these flowers that cover the earth, our thoughts may be lifted to the land where flowers forever bloom.

E. T. COLEMAN.

PRIZE POEM.

Refreshed by bathing in the icy sea,
Whose crystal wavelets wash the Beacon Hill,
I sat reposing ; a delightful thrill
Of health renewed made life an ecstasy.
The scene around me was in full sympathy ;
A bright sun shining in a cloudless blue,
The green grass starred with azure flowerets too,
Sweetly combined in natural harmony,
Beneath the eye, the clear wave feeling round
The massive rocks or on the pebbly shore
Lazily breaking with a pleasing sound,
Gave out a soothing murmur and no more :
The snowy mountains cut their outlines high,
Up from their cloudy basis, on the sky.

The Sound between us lay a glassy lake,
Adorned with islets here and there ;
And, musically, through the summer air,
Did distant waterfowl the silence break
With playful bickerings ; their voices make
A far off melody that on the ear
Falls with a pleasing echo, still and clear.
Air, earth, sea, creatures seem to doze and wake,
Then lie asleep in perfect summer calm ;
Enough of life to bask in such a sky—
The earth so fragrant and the air so balm ;
And let the world and all its cares go by,
To lie in rapture through the sunny hours
Drinking in warmth and glory with the flowers.

Vancouver ! Nature with a liberal hand
Has thee, the most remote of Britain's isles,
Dowered with her richest gifts and brightest smiles.
Thy features bring to mind our native land ;
And those who wander hither from her strand
Behold another England in the west,
With sweeter air and rival scenery drest,
Overlooking which a barrier vast and grand
Of snowy mountains on the neighboring shore,
Whose rocky pinnacles, on high sublime,
Search all thy coast, and view the landscape o'er.
How Nature has adorned thy healthful clime,

And Beacon Hill, a cluster of her best,
Has placed, a blooming chaplet, on thy crest.

Yet o'er the waters let me look abroad,
And ere I rise to quit this lovely scene,
Those wild rose bowers and flow'r dappled green,
Let thought advance from Nature to her God.
As those dark mountains, from the level clod
Still growing up, are ever growing less ;
So may my life through trials upward press,
Losing throughout its course some earthly load.
As, in obscurity and gloom begun
They rise to light, clothed with unsullied snow ;
So may my life's last days the cheering sun
Shine o'er, and purity adorn me so,
Till godly wisdom from the hoary crown,
Like fruitful streams from snowy peaks, flow down,

W. H. PARSONS.